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MIS Class Presents to Zions Bank



Dr. Nicole Forsgren's Business Analytics class (MIS 3860) faced not only their peers and professor for their latest class presentations, but also members from the Zions Bank analytics team.

The Zions team first heard about this project when, based on their knowledge of the class from a previous intern, they stopped by Dr. Forsgren's office before the MIS Meet the Firms event to learn more about the class.

"When I was describing the class, I highlighted this particular project and pulled out examples from prior semesters," Dr. Forsgren said. "They were very impressed with the scope of the project and the output from undergraduate students."

The biggest difference in this project was its comprehensive nature and size. The students were provided with large data sets from real companies (anonymized) and given complete freedom in identifying the business questions they would like to answer.

Huntsman students Carter Fawson and McKay Harris worked on a model that predicted how much revenue a band at a record label would bring in each year. They found that the two most influential variables that contributed to revenue were how many albums the band had come out with and how much the band's agent was being paid.

"It was good to have the Zions Bank representatives come up because I want to get a career in the Data Science field, and they gave really good feedback on how we could improve the way we looked at predictive modeling and data science in general," Fawson said.

Garrett Jensen, another Huntsman student in the class, tried to see if it was possible to build a "geographic customer profile" from the data available for Sam's Club. They wanted to find where customers buy, how much they buy each time they visit the store, and how they pay for what they buy (cash, check, credit, etc). Through several predictive models, they were able to answer all of their questions.

"This class gave us a hands-on chance to learn a variety of skills to work on those big data problems that many businesses are facing," Jensen said. "Since the beginning of the semester I have been offered jobs and consulting opportunities simply from the things learned in this class. We obviously haven't learned everything at this point, but this class was definitely an excellent jumping off point."

"We came away impressed with the students' ability to dive into a foreign dataset, make sense of what they were seeing, and provide insights or recommendations on how to improve business outcomes – all within the span of a few weeks,"

said Anthony Nielson, Vice President of Business Analytics at Zions Bancorporation. "The experiences these teams had on this project were fairly representative of what they can expect in the business world, which will benefit them greatly as they look for jobs within the realm of analytics. I would encourage students to take this course as soon as possible in preparation for internships and employment opportunities."